2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

One such ob- 114
server, commenting upon the dances of the elite and of the peasant 535
declared:

> All the more undisguised is the crude sensuality among the lower classes of the Haitian population. Here every motion is obscene; and I am not at all considering the popular merrymakings or dance festivals secretly held partly in open, partly in forests, which are more like orgies, in which the African savagery, which has outlived centuries, has unbridled expression.[1]

Whatever the Haitian dance is, it is none of these things. The Haitian 535
himself is neither obscene nor unbridled. His dancing, like his everyday 831
life, is governed by social controls. He would be as surprised and offended by a sexual orgy as most Europeans. But he is not burdened with abstract concepts of chastity. Sex impulses are as fundamental and as taken [183] ●
for granted as rain, drought, and sunlight. The Haitian finds no virtue in living according to standards that have no relation to his realities.

The Haitian, like the West African, is undoubtedly a less tormented creature, so far as sex is concerned, than his European and American cousins. Since he is less tormented he can be more frank. And it was an expression of this frankness in certain of the Haitian secular dances that once aroused dismay among foreign chroniclers, and that still stirs the curiosity of tourists.

Yet if you were to witness fifty Haitian dances in their natural setting, you still might not see any direct sex expression. You might see more sex play and display in a dance hall or night club in New York, Chicago, Milwaukee, or Los Angeles. That is not to say that there are no sexual allusions in Haitian dancing. In the ordinary Saturday night *bamboche*, or social dance, there may be a good deal of loin movement and suggestion. In Haitian context, however, it is no more significant than two persons of opposite sexes pressing close together to the music of a dreamy orchestra at the "Roseland." In Haitian religious dancing, sexual motifs may occasionally emerge, but they are integral parts of ritualistic symbolism.

One of the deficiencies of early literature on the dances of Haiti is 114
that it did not differentiate between religious and secular dances. Further- 535
more, it is evident that writers tended to use a single name, such as Chica or Bamboula, to cover virtually any kind of dance festivity, much as many white Cubans refer today to all sorts of Afro-Cuban cult dances as Bembé. Because the terminology of ill-informed planters was adopted by the chroniclers, we are now able to form only some very general notions of Haitian dancing of the eighteenth century and before. Of all the reporters on the dance, Moreau de Saint-Méry seems to have been aware of differences, though his frequent departures into specula-

[1] [Quoted in Courlander, Haiti Singing, p. 73. Cf. P. 352, Category 116. -- Analyst]

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

named in the song has been dead for years does not seem to matter very much:

Mènè'm allé oh parleur!	Take me to the parlor!
Mènè'm allé!	Take me!
Mènè'm allé!	Take me!
Mènè'm allé oh parleur Borno!	Take me to Borno's parlor!
Mènè'm allé oh! [Ex. 120]	Take me, oh!

Sometimes the challenge is directed to a more lowly level of authority, such as the gendarme:

Gendarme, mènè'm nan bureau!
Rwo, gendarme oh! [Ex. 121]

Gendarme, take me to the police station!
Rwo, gendarme, oh!

Haitians are notable for their restraint from physical violence. During holiday celebrations it is not uncommon to see men who have drunk enough tafia to make them act up. Some of them may even be morose and bellicose. But the disturbances of the peace more often than not are verbal. So long as the first blow is not struck, the social pressures against violence operate effectively. But physical assault against an individual—a push, a blow, a slap—is an affront to personal dignity which relieves the victim of the social restraints and gives him the right to bodily revenge. I have seen waterfront rows, fierce and vocal, in which no one but the participants showed much interest. But should one man shove or strike another, the spectators would immediately interfere, for that single physical contact would have removed the barriers to the worst violence. Sometimes at carnival time a man assumes the guise of belligerence. Such a bully may roll up one trouser leg to indicate he is challenging all and sundry to a fight. Usually, passers-by move aside good-naturedly when he approaches. He is not taken seriously; but neither is he challenged, except by another man in the same frame of mind. When two men with rolled trouser legs meet, there may be a verbal encounter, possibly from opposite sides of the street, to the general entertainment of the bystanders. It is usually a serio-comic affair. Some of the folk songs memorialize occasions on which a man has publicly spoiled for a fight, real or imaginary. This song comments briefly on a man named Çalira, who looked for trouble:

Woy woy woy!
Woy woy woy!
Woy woy woy!
Çac bien arrangé corps yo!
Mène en bataille là!

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

One of Christophe's rules was that no cultivator attached to

a plantation—and every ordinary country person was so attached —might leave the estate without permission from a military officer.[10] Two of the common folkways of Haitian peasant life since his time have been immobility and general acceptance of orders from the military. Both characteristics had been fostered by slavery and by the régimes of Toussaint and Dessalnes, and these folkways became fixed under Christophe.

Other rules introduced by the King, however, lapsed shortly after his strong hand was removed. For example, the monarch required of the whole population that whenever they visited the capital on feast days or went to the market towns on Saturdays they be decently clad in clean clothes.[11] Since the time of Christophe, neatness of appearance has hardly been a folk characteristic, probably because of poverty rather than lack of desire to dress well. Nor did scrupulous regularity of work in the fields continue as a folkway later, when the great plantations were broken up.

Like a father the King tried to inculcate moral standards of honesty in his people. To prevent theft he had small valuables, such as watches or jewelry or purses, "planted," and if the finder did not immediately turn them over to the nearest Dahomet, punishment was meted out. Such a policy made honesty contagious. Thefts and depredation were soon almost unknown. The most tempting store of wealth could be left safely unlocked or in the open air. Christophe's achievement in this matter is eloquent testimony to his success as a paternal leader, for it is no small task to initiate moral ideas among people who for a generation have lacked them. Even today it is the proud boast of the Haitians that their people are honest.

As compared with the liberties of farmers in the United States of the same period, the Haitian agricultural workers' freedom was infinitesimally small, but by contrast with the bondage of slavery, their new status was definitely higher.

10. Christophe called his royal police force "Dahomets," after the West African kingdom, Dahomey, from which most of the men had come. They were not ordinary soldiers but especially imported and carefully selected men whose intelligence made them stand out from their fellows. Each Dahomet was given a course of training in his task as administrator before being sent out. The general consensus of foreign visitors was that these Dahomets were efficient even in small matters.

11. This rule was partly an indication of Christophe's vanity, personal and national, for he was deeply desirous of the good opinion of white visitors, especially those from England. He wanted Europeans to respect Haiti as they would respect any small state, and not to praise it merely as an example of "Negro progress."